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طالب العلم والكتب

The Student of Knowledge and Books

A Transcribed Lecture from Shaikh Saalih bin 'Abdil-'Azeez Aali Shaikh

- may Allaah preserve him -

al-ibaanah e-books

First Edition: February 2007
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About the Book: This is a translation of a small on-line booklet called: ***"Taalib-ul-'Ilm wal-Kutub"*** [The Student of Knowledge and Books] which was originally a lecture delivered by Shaikh Saalih bin 'Abdil-'Azeez Aali Shaikh in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and transcribed by a student of knowledge then made available for free on the internet in Arabic. The source used for this translation was the one found in www.sahab.org.

In this book, the Shaikh discusses seven etiquettes that a Muslim, and in particular a student of knowledge, should abide by with regard to books. The author has done an excellent job in explaining these general guidelines and points.

Indeed this treatise comes at a crucial time since as the English speaking Muslims in the West increase so does the printed literature that they acquire to learn the fundamentals of their Religion, not to mention those who are able to read and collect books in Arabic. Therefore, such a discussion is necessary to provide guidance and advice on how to acquire, handle, preserve and use these religious books, which are being produced at an ever-increasing rate in recent times.

It is hoped that this e-book in conjunction with the recently launch Classical Knowledge Series publications will provide the English readers with a solid basis on the basics and principles of knowledge in terms of seeking it, acquiring it, teaching it and propagating it.

A Publication of Al-Ibaanah E-Books

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From the Lecture: The Introduction

All praise is for Allaah and may the peace and praises be on the Messenger of Allaah, as well as his family, Companions and whoever follows his guidance. To proceed:

I ask Allaah that He make this practice of ours (of meeting for lessons) one of goodness, knowledge, action, dutifulness and rectification, and that He increase us in it in beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds. I also ask that He strengthen our aspirations with regard to knowledge and action and that He raise our determination for studying knowledge as well as acquiring, preserving and remaining firm upon it.

As an introduction to our classes on this subject, Allaah-willing, we will speak, as usual, on a general topic that comes to mind which has some benefit in it, if Allaah wills. Our talk today will be on: **"The Student of Knowledge and Books."**

It is well known that knowledge is acquired via two methods – either, ***orally by way of hearing*** and sitting with the people of knowledge and taking knowledge from them through listening with one's ears or ***by way of books***, and that is through researching, investigating and studying. The first way is the same method as the second way, whereas the correctness of the second method is based on the first.

This is as one of the scholars said: "Knowledge used to be in the breasts of men then it transferred into the interior of books. However, its keys remained in the hands of men."

This means that books possess a high level of importance to the student of knowledge. However, the only ones that can properly deal with these books and correctly understand them are those who establish themselves on the path of studying at the hands of the people of knowledge, mixing with them and comprehending what they meant by the words they recorded in these books.

Recording knowledge in books is something ancient with regard to people. Previous civilizations prior to the civilization of Islaam would give very high importance to the written word. The revealed scriptures of Allaah used to be recorded as Allaah says:

وَمَا آتَيْنَاهُم مِّن كُتُبٍ يَدْرُسُونَهَا

"And We have not given them Scriptures (i.e. books) which they could study…" [Surah Saba: 44]

And He says:

فِيهَا كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ

"Wherein are correct and upright books (i.e. laws)." [Surah Al-Bayyinah: 3]

And our Lord, Mighty and Sublime, inscribed and wrote in the Tablets for Moosaa. Books then continued to remain amongst people and they would spread it around through writings. One of the important issues was that of preserving books from changes and alterations. Thus people would show high regard for them and safeguard them. This matter applied generally to all nations. Allaah made His revealed scriptures into trials and tests for the nations to see whether or not they will preserve them. Unfortunately, all of the revealed scriptures before the Qur'aan were not preserved and so they fell victim to the well-known distortion in wording and distortion in meaning that took place.

Allaah particularly guaranteed that He would preserve and protect this Qur'aan as well as the sciences of the Prophet of Islaam, Muhammad. He says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"Verily, We have indeed sent down the Reminder and surely We will guard it." [Surah Al-Hijr: 9]

The **"Reminder"** here refers to the Qur'aan. The Sunnah, which clarifies it, is also preserved. So Allaah has preserved the Qur'aan and He has preserved the Sunnah.

What this means is that there are things that are written that have been subject to distortions, alterations and modifications. So therefore, not everything that is written is to be considered authentic, nor is everything that is inscribed in paper to be considered beneficial or correct. Rather, it must be from the preserved forms of knowledge, which means that its preservation from changes and alterations must be in the form of the conservation of its wording as well as its

meaning.

In the first stages of this ummah, only a small amount of the Companions recorded the Sunnah. This goes the same for those who came after them. The Taabi'een recorded – as is well known from the record of Hamaam bin Munabbih from Abu Hurairah and other records – only some things from the Sunnah.

Also, the letters that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ sent to the kings of the various regions of the world and to his representatives and commanders were preserved. What was also preserved were the letters written by the rightly-guided Khaleefahs and those rulers who came after them as well as the letters the Companions wrote between themselves.

This transpired up to the time when the recording of knowledge took place at which point books were written and documented and the people advanced in that field to the extent that books were written on all of the various sciences of Islaam.

So the first of books began to be written – on Hadeeth and Sunnah, then on Tafseer, then on the Language and the Meanings of the Qur'aan. Then the writings and books became diversified. Since things were this way, the scholars began to advise the students to preserve books from changes and modifications since books are written and copied. If a book's authorship and mass-production are both correct, this ensures that the book itself will be correct. On the other hand, if a book's text is not precise and its replication is not accurate it falls under the deficiencies in knowledge due to the lack of precision and accuracy in its writing and transcription.

It is for this reason that a group of authors, such as Al-Jaahidh in his book *al-Haywaan* and others, mentioned that there were some scholars who would purchase three copies of the same book possessing an identical chain and text of narration. And if that book's chain and text of narration varied, i.e. were more than one, they would strive even harder to acquire (extra) copies of all of these different versions of the same book! This was due to their intense zeal for obtaining precision and accuracy in knowledge. The reason they did this was because it was possible that a word in one manuscript differed from a word in another manuscript or that an entire sentence was left out or that a place in the manuscript was distorted and so the error would become clear and discernable when comparing it to another manuscript (of the same book).

The scholars would advise the students of knowledge to strive hard to maintain and conserve their books so that they could remain preserved and safeguarded from changes and alterations. They did this to instill the concept that recording in these books has its proper etiquettes and that a student of knowledge must be precise and accurate in the comments, footnotes, benefits, questions and so on that he writes in a printed manuscript. This is such that he is able to benefit from what he writes and so that the book does not become altered by his writing between the lines and so on.

This is why in their books on narrating and their books on seeking knowledge, the scholars have placed etiquettes for the student of knowledge when dealing with books. The closest thing in resemblance that a book has with regard to a student of knowledge is like that of one of his body parts. So the books of a student of knowledge are like his cells which he needs to live. They are his ears and his eyes, which if he were to lose, his knowledge would become gradually weaker.

You will notice that the one who is weak in referencing (his books) and weak in researching knowledge and reading, that he grows weak little by little. He forgets knowledge gradually until he becomes a common person after a number of years have passed.

Researching knowledge in books is from the most important of matters! This requires a student of knowledge to have an immense connection with books. However, this connection has its etiquettes and conditions which the scholars have outlined and explained in their works, such as the book "*al-Jaami'*" of Ibn 'Abdil-Barr and the book of Ibn Jamaa'ah on the etiquettes of seeking knowledge known as "*Tadhkirat-us-Saami' wal-Mutakallim*."

There are many other books on this subject that talk about how a student of knowledge should deal with books. We will mention some of these points. But before embarking on the general etiquettes of books, we would like to mention that a student of knowledge's high regard for books indicates his high regard for knowledge.

Therefore, from among the etiquettes that a student of knowledge should characterize himself with regarding books is that of:

Etiquette One: Arranging and Organizing Books

A student should arrange his books in such a way that it is easy for him to refer to them if there is an issue that requires him to research some of his books. This means that he should maintain his books in a certain order. The way the books are to be organized depends on the preference of this student. So if he requires that all of his books on Tafseer be arranged together and all of his books on Hadeeth be arranged together, and he further divides the Tafseer section into its various sciences and the Hadeeth section into its various sciences, and the Fiqh books into their respective *madh-hab's* and so on and so forth, then there is no harm in this. And if he decides to arrange his books in some other order that he feels is more beneficial, then there is also no problem with this. The objective is for the book to be in a place where if he looks for it, he will find it.

Books are divided into two types: Large books and small treatises. As for the large books, then these are the ones that we see in a library. This is since they are big – 10 volumes, 15 volumes, 13 volumes, 14 volumes, etc. This is clear. Rather, what deserves special attention are the small treatises, which are also important. It is possible that these smaller books may contain knowledge that cannot be found in the bigger books.

When he needs to refer to one of these small treatises, he looks for it but can't find it. Why? It is because he has not put it in its proper place. One should take special care of these small treatises by putting them in a separate area. This means that they should not be put amidst the works of research and the larger books. So for example, a person may put a large book on his shelf and then next to it place a small book, in terms of its pages, and then next to that a small 40-50 page treatises and so on! The scholars have devoted some of their attention to this aspect, such that they have put forth what they call "compilations" consisting of a volume or more in which there can be found 10 or 12 treatises or more.

So if it's possible, a student of knowledge should compile these small treatises into a collection, placing booklets of a similar subject into one volume. This means that he should put all the small treatises that deal with the manners of seeking knowledge in one specific volume, for example, or the small treatises that deal with the subject of Hadeeth terminology in a separate volume or the essays on the sciences of Tafseer and the sciences of Qur'aan in one specific collection and so on and so forth.

Likewise, he should place his Fiqh-related books and treatises separately. It is also appropriate to divide the Fiqh-related books and treatises into different sections, within themselves, according to what topics of Fiqh (jurisprudence) they fall under. So for example, one should place a treatise on crimes in its proper place amongst the chapters of Fiqh, thus organizing his books in this manner. He should begin with the treatises that deal with purification, followed by the treatises that deal with prayer.

Even those treatises on prayer should be subdivided into those that deal with the conditions of prayer first followed by the rulings on prayer which include the prostration of forgetfulness, for example. Each book should be put in its proper place. They should not be placed in the section of Zakaat, say, which comes after the prayer. The same should then be done with similar treatises, i.e. these small booklets that are hard to locate if one needs to refer to them. They should be organized according to their subjects of jurisprudence.

The same goes for the rest of the Islamic sciences whether they deal with history, Creed or their likes. One should put the books that cover Creed in general amongst the general books or treatises on Creed. Or he should place those subjects on Creed that he is researching into different sections on Creed so that it is easy for him to refer back to them.

So the first etiquette with regard to books is that one must organize his books in a good manner. Maintaining one's library in order is an indication of a student of knowledge's regard for his books.

However, if you visit and are granted access to a person's library and find that his books are scattered around, in disorder and so on, this is due to ether one of two possibilities. The books are this way either because (1) the person researches his books a lot and needs to refer to them, thus causing his books to be scattered about – and even though this is something praiseworthy he should still put them back in their proper places afterward – or (2) he does not organize his books at all to begin with.

In his book on the judges of Egypt, which is called *Raf'u-il-Isr 'an Qudaat Misr*, Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr records a biography of one of the judges in Egypt and mentioned that when he was granted his judicial position, he would sit in a place where his books were on display. His books would be arranged in a nice and neat order. A student of knowledge entered his office once and saw his books and said: "What excellent order these books are in!" He was insinuating

that the neat order and arrangement that his books were in indicated his lack of referencing them and using them. The judge understood this and kept it a secret to himself.

Later on, this man that had criticized the judge for having his books neatly arranged was put in charge of recording people's marriages, i.e. the marriage contracts – something like an official that is licensed to wed couples. So the judge discovered that he had made an error in one of his marriage certificates and then rebuked him harshly. This shows that he had preserved that statement he made (a long time ago) in his memory.

The point is that this student used the fact that the judge's books were neatly arranged as proof that he didn't read or use them. But this is not always the case. If a student of knowledge wants to work on a subject or research an issue and he takes a number of books out, putting them in front of him and looking into this one and looking into that one, when he finishes, he should return them back to their proper place so that it will be easy for him to refer back to them at a later time.

Etiquette Two: Acquiring the Most Accurate Editions of Books

From the manners of dealing with books is that a student of knowledge focuses his attention on the revised and accurate editions of books only. In the old days, books used to be bought from a manuscript transcriber known as a *warraaq*. A person was called a *warraaq* if he had a place where he would manually transcribe a copy of a book and sell it to buyers or sell it to someone who intended to sell his manuscripts (i.e. dealers). These people were known as *warraaqoon* – those who devoted their time to transcribing books by hand or to just selling books. Amongst these transcribers were those who were vary careful in their work and others who weren't.

The closest things in resemblance to them in our time are the publishing houses and print shops that exist today. They have inherited the work of the *warraaqoon* throughout the passage of time. This is why we say that the occupation of the copyists was taken over in detail as time passed on by the scholars. A student of knowledge should strive to buy a verified and edited book or to transcribe one by hand whilst comparing what he has copied to the original manuscript. Or he should buy a book and compare it with a reliable source copy that is studied in the presence of scholars and so on and so forth.

What this means is that a student of knowledge should focus on acquiring the authentic and verified editions of book whether in manuscript or published form. In this day and age, most of the students of knowledge devote their attention and concern to only the published books. This is why we see that the books in print today are many.

The publication of books in the Arabic Language began a little more than five centuries ago, i.e. printing books in Arabic started more than 500 years ago, which was around 1400-1500 AD, since that is the time they were dated. However, the majority of the books that were printed in the Arabic Language in the Arab and Muslim lands only occurred in the last two-hundred years. Whatever was printed before that was published in the western countries due to their high regard for publishing books.

The point of all this is to show that the publication of books is something old and well established. Today one can find displayed in the marketplaces and stores a variety of different publishing companies, books, and names of verifiers and editors, etc. This is why many times that a phrase or a sentence is quoted from a

recently published book, which is not necessarily revised accurately or precisely, the result is that discrepancies and mix-ups occur.

This happened to me several times while teaching in the mosque's study area. I confirm the reading of a passage (from a book being studied), for example, based on an accurate edition of the book, then one of the students of knowledge comes and presents a recent edition of the same book in which the passage in there is inaccurate. The reason for this is because the contemporary publishing companies are not all precise and meticulous with the books they print. This also can apply to the older publishing companies. So regardless if the book was published a long time ago or recently, you should strive to find which edition of the book is the most accurate.

If you are interested in purchasing a book or acquiring knowledge on some subject, you must seek to attain the most accurate edition of the book that has been published with precision. So you should ask the people of knowledge or those who have expertise on this subject, saying for example: "What is the most reliable edition of such and such book?" "What is the most accurate edition of *Tafseer Al-Qurtubee*?" "What is the most accurate edition of *Tafseer At-Tabaree*?" "What is the most accurate edition of *Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*?" – which if you acquire, you will keep in your library and have no need for another edition of the book to go along with it.

What we have observed today from many publications is that you find the publishing companies only print books for commercial purposes and so they come out unreliable. This is why you should ask about which edition you should acquire or which edition you want to purchase. So you should not just buy any book that is thrown at you. Rather, you should ask about it and become aware of the publishing company that has produced it.

If a certain individual has verified and reviewed the publication of the book, you should ask about whether or not this individual is accurate or inaccurate in his verification. Is he a businessman or not? And so on and so forth. To reiterate, a student of knowledge should focus on acquiring only the most accurate edition of a particular book.

He should only buy a book after enquiring about it. For example, you should ask: "Which is the most accurate edition of *Tafseer Al-Qurtubee*?" So if you receive an answer to this question, you should then go and strive to acquire this edition of the book regardless of whether it is printed or photocopied or published in

modern times via computer formatting. You should strive to acquire only the correct and accurate editions of books.

What I have noticed according to my opinion is that most of the books that the brothers have in their hands are editions that are not accurate and precise. They may have a valid copy of the book however it is not completely accurate.

Some individual has taken charge of the overview of its publication but what he has done can hardly be called "taking charge." Or it is said that the edition was amended by the publishing house and so on and so forth, however, it contains mistakes and errors the likes of which make the edition defective and not fit for a student of knowledge to acquire and reference and use for researching information.

Therefore, the second etiquette is that a student of knowledge should strive to acquire the accurate and precise editions regardless of whether they are printed in older form or they are recent publications. What is important is that the edition is accurate. So one should get to know and become acquainted with which publishing companies are meticulous and precise and which publishing companies are not. This is so that he will be able to know and distinguish which editors are just interested in business from which ones show great concern and care for their verifications. By doing this, he will also be able to tell the advantages that certain editions have over others, as well as how many times one book has been published.

We will diverge from the topic a little here and say that a student of knowledge should also be careful when looking into verifications and what people do nowadays such as placing footnotes and comments in their books. He should be aware of the different editions that exist for a book because it may be for example that an editor makes a reference to a volume and page number of a particular book and the reader believes that the book was only printed once. So when he goes to reference the volume and page number of the edition that he has, he cannot find it and says: "This person has erred or made a mistake." It is possible that this same book was published over a hundred times or twenty times of thirty times or five times or four times and so on and so forth. So if a student of knowledge is aware of the different editions of the book and the number of times it was printed and the advantages and merits that some editions have over others, this is from the supplementary forms of knowledge that is from the general etiquettes that a student of knowledge should abide by.

Etiquette Three: Keeping One's Books Clean and Tidy

The third etiquette with regard to books is that one must strive to keep his books clean and preserved. This means that his books should be clean and have no dust attached to them. They should not be dirty nor should they have any bad markings on them. They should also not be put in an improper place, meaning the book should be put in an appropriate place that is befitting for it.

From that which is not befitting for books – especially the books of the people of knowledge in which can be found a clarification of the meanings of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah – is that they have dirt, dust and filth on them. Keeping books clean is a sign of one's respect for what is contained in them and a proof that one magnifies the symbols of Allaah. Allaah says:

وَمَن يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِن تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ

"And whoever magnifies the symbols of Allaah, then that is truly from the piety of the hearts." [Surah Al-Hajj: 32]

So if the book is on Tafseer or on the Sunnah or on Fiqh – the lawful and unlawful – or on Creed, then a person should strive to preserve them. Maintaining books clean falls under honoring Allaah and honoring the religious knowledge that is taken from the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

When dealing with books, from the perspective of preserving and safeguarding them, a student of knowledge should also be careful of not turning his book into a parcel for his documents, special essays or receipts, i.e. such as the sales receipts for the books he bought and so on. If you were to pick up one of his books and look at it you would find that there is a receipt and a treatise inside it or that there is a pen and an eraser inside it and so on an so forth. Some of the scholars have said: "Do not turn your book into a bouquet or a parcel."

This is one of the important etiquettes with regard to books – that you not turn them into storage bins such as by placing pens inside them or treating them like repositories for money and currency. So if you were to open up a book you would find all of these things inside them and notice that the book's binding has become worn and that the book has changed and so on due to the book not being preserved properly.

A book should also not be turned into a bouquet, i.e. it should not be folded in an inappropriate manner, since a book contains the words of Allaah and the words of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. So it is not proper to treat a book in this manner.

It is also not proper to put a glass of water or a cup of tea or their likes on top of books. The books of the people of knowledge, which contain texts from the Qur'aan and the Sunnah should be put in the highest places and not in the lowest places with pieces of paper and such on top of them. Abiding by this etiquette instills respect in the heart for the words of Allaah and the words of the Messenger of Allaah, not to mention the knowledge that is derived from these two sources.

What is also related to preserving books is when a student of knowledge is careful in the manner that he records text from books. Sometimes, we see books with written comments in them that are annotated in such a way that their benefit is squandered. In what has preceded, we have seen that the scholars forbade from writing small letters in books, such as when you write notes using tiny lettering or when you make notes on points of benefit found in your book using such small letters that if a student of knowledge wanted to, he would not be able to benefit from them. In what has been reported, Imaam Ahmad one time regretted having recorded *ahaadeeth* with small handwriting. This is since when he needed to refer to them in his old age, he was not able to extract these points of benefit because they were written in very tiny letters and the ink from the letters were so close to each other that it was hard to read and thus the benefit was lost.

Some scholars or students of knowledge may not have good handwriting. This is not a flaw. However, one should arrange his letters in such a way that they are written clearly. This is since some of the scholars who didn't possess good handwriting would not be able to read even their own handwriting, as was the case with Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah whose writings would have to be extracted by one of his students. This is mentioned in the books on Biographies.

Al-Haafidh Ibn Katheer indicated this in the 14th volume of his collection *al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah* while discussing the year in which this student of Ibn Taimiyyah passed away. He said: "And he was the one who would be able to extract the second sermon of Ibn Taimiyyah. And whenever Ibn Taimiyyah would want to take a portion (from his writings), no one would be able to extract

it except for him since Shaikh-ul-Islaam (Ibn Taimiyyah) would write in a hurry and his writings would be unclear, so at times it would appear obscure to him."

This was due to the letters being written very small. This could work, however it is not possible all the time, which is why a student of knowledge needs to know how to write in his books.

The scholars of Hadeeth have advised in their etiquettes on writing that when a student of knowledge wants to write, he should start from the line that he is in or in which can be found the note, then continue by going up towards the top and not the bottom. This means that when you study a book with a teacher or you make notes in a book and you come upon an area where you begin writing (a comment), you should transfer from that line to a line above it. The reason for this is because you may encounter a point of benefit in the line that follows that one, which requires you to write a note for it, and so then you will be confused on how to write it. Start ascending to the line above it. If you write from the bottom to the top, this will ensure that your writing will be clear.

You should also try to make your lines straight but designed in a sloping manner such that if you want to correct anything later, you can insert that correction in the empty spaces that are between the slants. Perhaps some of you have seen some of the old books with notes in them and noticed that these (notes) were written in blocks of text that appear to be in the shape of triangles. This was not done in vain and without purpose. Rather, these books were written this way – in the manner of the ancestors – because they needed to be verified afterward. The corrections would be placed in the empty spaces (on the sides of the triangle) or the book would be compared to another manuscript and notes from that manuscript would be annotated in these empty spaces.

So therefore, you must give great importance to having handwriting that is clear and organized in terms of knowing the place where the writing starts. So if I were to look at what you wrote and the notes you made, I would know where the note you made for this sentence begins and in which direction it will go.

Also, if you reference the books on terminology, their authors have explained how to write and make notes in books using guidelines and details that they have established on either preserving the text, explaining a word, making a correction, writing a footnote, clarifying which manuscript it is or how to write valid phrases and so on. So we should refer to these books on terminology because their authors wrote about this and talked about it in detail.

Etiquette Four: Recording the Points of Benefit found in Books

Another etiquette regarding books which deserves attention is: A student of knowledge should maintain (a list of) selected points of benefit for each of his books. This means that if someone reads a book and he doesn't feel that he will remember or be able to recall what he read later – even if he is young – he should select points of benefit from this book and write them down in a special notebook. Or he can make references to them in the preface of the book, such as in a page at the beginning of the book. So he makes something that resembles a table of contents, however, it is specifically catered to him since these points of benefit that apply to him may not apply to others.

So they are specifically for you when you need to reference something you learned from this book at a later time. Two nights ago, I took the book *al-Fadl-ul-Mubeen fee Sharh al-Arba'een* of Jamaal-ud-Deen Al-Qaasimee from its place in my library. It had been almost ten years since I last read the book, but when I opened it up to its first page, lo and behold, I found the points of benefit in the book that I had written down a long time ago. And there were many, many points of benefit of which I had forgotten almost ninety percent of them. So instead of reading the book over again, all I had to do was look at this point of benefit and that point of benefit and so on.

One of the points of benefit found in the book, for example, was the author's discussion on the difference between the *'Aalim* and the *'Aarif* and the reason why the Sufis renounced the word *'Aalim* in favor of using the word *'Aarif* and why they say the 'Aarif so and so and not the "'Aalim" (i.e. scholar) so and so. This is one of the points of benefit found in this book.

Another point of benefit in the book was an excellent and firm quote from Ibn Hazm found in his book *al-Fisal* on the meanings of the (verbs) *qadaa* (to divinely ordain) and *qaddara* (to divinely pre-decree). At the end of the quote, Jamaal-ud-Deen Al-Qaasimee says: "And this is the most brilliant of what was said concerning the meaning of *qadaa* and *qaddara* and what has the most right to be accepted." And it is just as he said. Perhaps I will relate that to you at a later time.

These points of benefit that you record at the beginning of the book are very important. If you refer to the book some time after reading it, you will find these points before you. This means that when you read a book or a group of books,

you should select points from them, which you feel are beneficial and useful to you and annotate them at the beginning of the book in the first page. So it will take the form of an index with brief phrases describing the point of benefit (and the page number where it can be found).

There is no doubt that this is extremely important for a student of knowledge. If you are able to make a special notebook in which you can place selected points that you may need, then this is important and you will definitely refer to it later on in time. It is not proper for you to read a book just like this and say that this (one-time) reading is sufficient because after one or two months or maybe after a year, you will forget what you read.

But if you write down (the most important points of) what you read, you can refer back to it years later and find that the points of benefit are available for display before you, as the saying goes: "Understanding is contingent – it comes and goes, whereas writing is recorded." Write down what you have understood or record what you have learned from the book.

Etiquette Five: Lending Books Out to Others

From the etiquettes related to books, also, is: The manners of lending out books. Giving out books for people to borrow is not allowed unless you are giving them to someone that you trust will care for the books. The reason for this is because you have the most right to your book, unless you find someone else that is in need of it and who, when finished using it, will return it back to you.

It is mentioned in the biography of Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadee that a man once asked him if he could borrow one of his books, so he replied saying: "You have three days to use it." The man said: "That is not enough time." So Al-Khateeb said: "I have counted its pages, so if you want to make a copy of it, then three days is sufficient for you. And if you want to read it, then three days is sufficient for you. And if you want to do more than that with it, then I have the most right to my book."

This is correct, since in the past I had lent the first volume of a large book consisting of eight volumes to a brother – I don't want to mention the title of the book, since perhaps he may hear this and think that I'm insinuating him - and now nearly twelve years have passed on, and he still has not returned it to me! And he tells me he doesn't know where he put it. Similarly, the eighth volume of another set – even though I'm not worried so much over it – however, more than twenty years have passed and until now, he has not given it back. This is why a poet once said:

"Do not lend your books
And make your answer some excuse
Whoever does in fact lend a book,
I swear he has not done something good."

Another person said: "The perdition of books is in lending them."

It was once said to a man from India who had opened up a huge library: "How did you create this library?" He replied: "By borrowing books from people." He was asked: "How is that?" So he said: "I borrow a book and don't return it. This is how I was able to create this library." The man asked: "Isn't this a crime against those you borrow from?" He replied: "Whoever lends his books to people is insane. And whoever gives back what he borrows is even more insane than him."

This is since souls are attached to books. In his book *al-Qawaa'id*, while speaking about a principle, Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab mentioned that there is no capital punishment of cutting off the hand for stealing them – i.e. if a person steals a book, then according to some scholars, he does not have to have his hand cut off. This is since there is a doubt in this – i.e. that the truth contained in books is (free) for everyone.

So for example, one of your fellow students or colleagues may get a book and then believe that he has a right to it, especially if the book is a charitable copy or it was given to you as a gift or so on. So this would cause him to take the issue of returning it lightly. He will be lax in giving the book back. And you will be the one who loses out on the book.

Therefore, if you are not sure if the one who is asking to borrow a book from you is serious and will benefit from it in a short amount of days and nights, then do not lend him the book. This is since when you lend your books out to people, you are depriving yourself from their benefit. And not every one that borrows a book can be trusted with it, for how many people have borrowed books and not returned them!

Etiquette Six: Reviewing and Inspecting One's Books

Also from the etiquettes related to caring for books, even though this topic is vast and covers many aspects, is that a student of knowledge should review and examine his books from time to time. This means that he should not amass books without reviewing what he has. So, for example, he goes out and gets this book and that book, puts them in his library and only refers to a small portion from them. One should continuously inspect all of his books.

You should go and examine what books you have so that you remember the subjects they cover. This is since some people buy the same book twice or three times or maybe even four times due to the fact that they have forgotten that they already have the book! And this is because of the few times that they inspect and review their collection.

But if one were to have a constant connection to his books – especially in countries such as ours where the libraries of some of the students of knowledge are big – if he does not review his books, perhaps he will ask to borrow the book from someone when he already has it himself! Or perhaps he may forget what is in the book or need to research a topic but because he doesn't review his collection, he makes no reference to that book.

Another etiquette regarding books is one's concern for donated books. Donated books refer to any book that has an imprint or seal on it that states that it is a donation (i.e. *waqf*). You may only keep these books in your library so long as you meet the donor's conditions. When a person donates books he is (firstly) making them available for the students of knowledge. If you are not using the book and someone else needs it, then giving the book to someone else that needs it is better. Yes, you may have a valid need for the book, even if it is one time in the year that you refer to it. There is nothing wrong with this since this book was given as a donation for the students of knowledge.

However, if you do not refer to the book and two years or four to five years have passed by without you looking into it and you acknowledge that you have no interest in referencing this book or these books in general or perhaps you won't need the book in the future, then in this case your keeping it contradicts its purpose.

Some scholars say that it is not permissible to keep these books (in this situation) and that they should be given to those who deserve them. They should be passed on to those who will use them and benefit from them. This is since the donor has intended them as donations for only those who will use them. If you are not using them then it is more fitting that it should go to someone who will.

There are some students of knowledge that feel that they are above keeping donated books if they have a lot of money and are able to obtain the book by buying it. This is since perhaps one may store away the book and not use it. So if the book is a charitable copy then it may be that he is sinning for withholding this book from someone who can use it. This is perhaps more noticeable in countries in which books are more scarce.

Etiquette Seven: Preserving and Safeguarding One's Books

Also from the etiquettes related to books is that one should make an effort to care for and reinforce their outer and inner parts as well as to keep them clean so that the books can be in a presentable condition that is befitting for others besides you.

This is since when a student of knowledge buys a book, he must have or should we say it's preferred for him to have two types of intentions. The first is that he should intend to benefit from it in order to free himself from ignorance. And secondly, he should intend that others benefit from the book as well – such as either his wife or his children. Afterward, the books can either remain with that person (in his family) or they can be donated after him. Or perhaps one can give them away to someone as a gift or sell them, and so on and so forth.

So every time someone takes care of his books – whether by binding them or preserving them so that they can last longer in the future – the result of this is that his reward and recompense will be greater for doing that.

From the amazing stories about negligence shown towards books is what was reported by Al-Qiftee, author of the book *Inbaa'-ur-Ruwaat*, concerning the story about him and the book *al-Ansaab* of As-Sam'aanee. Perhaps I mentioned it to you before. Al-Qiftee was very enthusiastic for books so much so that he had gathered a collection of books that was from the best of what could be compiled.

He said: "The book *al-Ansaab* of As-San'aanee in the author's own handwriting was presented to me, and it consisted of the second, third and fourth volumes, however, the first volume in the author's handwriting was missing." Even though there was a span of close to 250 years between the time of Al-Qiftee and that of As-Sam'aanee, he nevertheless purchased the three volumes and said: "So I bought them."

Then some time had passed during which he would continuously ask people about this book trying to find the first volume. He kept asking about it and getting nothing in reply to the point that he thought the book was missing and that that was the end of it. Perhaps the book written in the author's handwriting had been borrowed by someone and then went missing or it had gotten lost, and so on.

He went on to say: "Then one day, my servant brought me a parcel of legumes – i.e. a kind of vegetable – wrapped up in pieces of paper that appeared to be originally from a book. So I grabbed the paper before the legumes" – since they had no value to him compared to these pieces of paper – "and when I looked at it, behold it was the handwriting of As-Sam'aanee, which I recognized! I then took it to my copy of the book *al-Ansaab* and discovered that this page was from the first volume that was missing! So I rushed in haste to the one who was selling the legumes and found that only a few pages from it were still left. So I asked him: 'Where are the rest of these papers?' He replied: 'We wrapped legumes with it and they are dispersed throughout the people's homes.'" So he said: "Verily, to Allaah we belong and to Him we will return!"

Someone's loss is another person's gain! This one is sad because of his loss, while the other is happy because he found these pieces of paper which contain the handwriting of Al-Haafidh As-Sam'aanee that have no value to him and which he instead used to wrap legumes in and give out to people.

So it is said that he, i.e. Al-Qiftee, then spent a month mourning over knowledge and its people and for the book *al-Ansaab* of As-Sam'aanee.

We wanted to say by relaying this story that one must take special care of his books – whether by way of reinforcing them or by way of preserving them. If one has the pages of a book all over the place then it is easy that the pages will get lost. But if they are preserved and attached to each other, this is the best way to guarantee that they will continue to exist in your library.

The issues related to this subject are many. Perhaps what we mentioned here will serve as a reminder for some of the things that are required with regard to books. I ask Allaah to grant myself and you success, correctness, uprightness and guidance, and may the peace, praises and blessings of Allaah be on our prophet, Muhammad.

[End of the Lecture]